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HOUSE RESOLUTION 23  
By Brooks

A RESOLUTION to create a special commission to conduct a study relative to reparation proposals for African-Americans.

WHEREAS, during the period of 1619 through 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and the colonies that became the United States; and

WHEREAS, until 1865, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned in this country; and

WHEREAS, the slavery that flourished in this nation and state constituted an immoral and inhumane deprivation of life, liberty, citizenship rights and cultural heritage, and denied Africans the fruits of their own labor; and

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WHEREAS, sufficient inquiry has not been made into the lingering effects of the institution of slavery upon living African-Americans and Tennessee society; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That a commission shall be appointed to:

(1) Review the institution of slavery as it existed from 1619 through 1865 within the United States and the colonies that became the United States: such review to include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following subjects:

(A) Capture and procurement of Africans;

(B) Transport of Africans to the United States and the colonies that became the United States for the purpose of enslavement, including their treatment during transport;

(C) Sale and acquisition of Africans as chattel property in interstate and intrastate commerce; and

(D) Treatment of African slaves in the colonies and the United States, including the deprivation of their freedom, exploitation of their labor, and destruction of their culture, language, religion, and families.

(2) Identify and examine examples of systematic discrimination against freed slaves and their descendants from the end of the Civil War to the present: such examination to include, but not necessarily be limited to, economic, political and social discrimination as well as the extent to which the governments of the United States and this state prevented, opposed or restricted efforts of freed African slaves to repatriate to their home land.

(3) Identify and examine federal and state laws that discriminated against freed African slaves and their descendants during the period between the end of the Civil War and the present.

(4) Identify and examine the lingering, pervasive effects of slavery and discrimination upon living African-Americans and Tennessee society.

(5) Examine issues pertaining to appropriate remedies: such examination to include, but not necessarily be limited to, analyses of the following issues:

(A) Should the State of Tennessee offer formal apology for the perpetration of gross human rights violations on African slaves and their descendants;

(B) Is any form of compensation to the descendants of African slaves warranted; and

(C) If there is a finding that compensation is warranted, what should be the amount of compensation, what form of compensation should be awarded, and who should be eligible for such compensation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission shall be composed of seven (7) members who shall be appointed and convened by the Speaker within the one hundred twenty (120) day period following adoption of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That not more than three (3) persons appointed to serve on the commission shall be members of the House of Representatives, and all members of the commission shall be persons who are especially qualified to serve on the commission by virtue of education, training or experience, particularly in the field of African-American studies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, at its first meeting, the commission shall elect from its legislative membership a chair and from its non-legislative membership a vice chair; and five (5) members shall constitute a quorum for transaction of commission business, however, a lesser number may receive testimony at public hearings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That non-legislative members of the commission shall receive no compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses incurred in the performance of official duties in conformity with comprehensive travel regulations as

promulgated by the department of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter, and all legislative members of the commission shall be paid for attending commission meetings as provided in Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 3-1-106.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission may hold such hearings and sit and act at such times and at such places within Tennessee, and request the attendance and testimony of such witnesses and the production of such books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, and documents, as the commission considers appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission is authorized to call upon any department, division, or entity of the state, to supply such data, program reports, and other information, personnel and assistance as it deems necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this resolution and any such department, division and agency shall, to the extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this state, cooperate with the commission, and shall furnish it with such information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or helpful to accomplish the purposes of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission may procure the services of experts and consultants, subject to the availability of funding for such purpose.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, within one (1) year of its first meeting, the commission shall issue a final report of findings and recommendations to the House of Representatives, at which time the commission shall terminate and cease to exist.